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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

JUNE 1st, 1852.

ENGLISH GLEE & MADRIGAL COMPOSERS.

No. VI.

Contributed by E. HOLMES, Author of the "Life of Mozart."

THE glee, as a species of English composition, has no longer any active existence, and may now almost be said to be extinct. In clubs, harmonic societies, and convivial meetings, glees are still heard, though scarcely any new ones are written; and they have altogether been so much withdrawn of late from general notice in concerts, that a special and well-patronised society has been formed to attract attention to their neglected merits.

It often happens in music that we enjoy the benefit of certain studies long after the form and fashion which first gave them currency have passed away. The madrigal age in England undoubtedly founded the taste here for grave and serious harmony, and for the fugal style which Handel, in his oratorios, was all his life-time exploring. The glee, likewise, has left us traditions of the most exquisite vocal combination, exhibiting the powers of the voice unaided by accompaniment, its capacity of delicate and expressive inflections, and, when tone and feeling are influenced by judicious and artistic management, far surpassing the powers of any instrument. There is nothing which the ear reposes upon with such delight as a fine chord given by voices.

The madrigal was formed for an age advancing in counterpoint; it exercised the science and ingenuity of our old organists and composers, taught them closeness of thinking, and gave a symmetrical correspondence to their scores. This style of composition was at length discarded from its formality and the contracted sphere it afforded to expression, of which there was necessarily an increasing want while the poetical fancy of the age was in restless and productive activity. Bad music has, however, seldom been laid to the charge of the madrigal composers. Monotony, formality, and the employment of trite themes of counterpoint, are faults sometimes justly urged against them, though generally, it must be admitted, after the severe test of an evening's performance, when the compositions which are best known and best performed carry the day. A tendency to the higher objects of the art, more or less successful in individual instances, must be generally admitted as the broad, distinctive characteristic of the madrigal style.

The faults of the glee style are more open to common experience and animadversion, inclining

more directly to corrupt the taste and misrepresent the true objects of music. The unusual success which attended the early productions of the English glee during a series of years in which it was found highly lucrative by composers and most attractive to audiences, may explain many of them. As the manufacturer of "the sweetest song of the season" still consults the sentimental thermometer when he would delight the school girls, so did the glee composer of yore, tasting the solid fruits of popularity, too often put aside the nobler objects of ambition, to consider what would be acceptable to the many-headed crowd. Hence many sins against taste—many a grandiose bass solo that might be dispensed with—many a trite passage for two voices, echoed by another two in the octave—many superfluous cadences and endings—much want of modulation—and a too indolent lingering in the region of insipid common chords.

But the musician who "pleased to live" was to consult the immediate sensations of his hearers; he could never persuade them to wait to be improved or directed to a higher standard. The voluptuous but uninstructed concert-goer of the year—80, "fond of music," as the phrase is, required every new composition to be as smooth as velvet, and as oily and soft as a glass of liqueur. He had no conception of any period of composition, when the first impression of a new work would not adequately convey the whole sum and substance of its merit. He had no idea of a conscience in hearers as well as in composers; he did not desire to raise debate, as is the case now in questions of art, but to be pleased in the good old way with the old traditional commonplaces. Whoever has an experience of the art extending to within ten years of the commencement of the century, will remember how this class of amateurs, judging by first sensation, abounded. And in truth they got little to judge. The songs of Shield, the melodies of Avison, and the duets of Jackson (of Exeter), were obvious things adapted to their capacity, and such merit as they contain formed in many cases their highest standard of excellence in music.

Towards the close of the last century, when the glee commenced its career, England was rich in singers of genius, adepts in all the finesse of vocal management, who had studied to obtain the full command of their voices totally independent of accompaniment, and learned to blend and combine them with as much delicacy as is to be obtained from the most refined artists on stringed instruments. Of Mrs. Billington, one who knew her in her bloom writes thus feelingly:—"The natural tone of her voice is so exquisitely sweet, her knowledge of music so considerable, her shake so true, her closes and embellishments so various, and her expression so grateful, that

nothing but envy or apathy can hear her without delight." This was one of the chief ornaments of our earliest glees, and it is not improbable that Madame Mara, who was Billington's model, also took part in them. The powers of these singers were as effectively displayed in the expressive delivery of a few notes, as in the most voluble passages of the bravura. Then there was Mrs. Sheridan (Miss Linley, of Bath), a singer of great expression, who one evening astonished Dr. Burney, by ascending to B flat in *altissimo*. Agujari, the celebrated Italian Prima Donna, went up a note higher without any grimace or distortion, and Mozart, who heard her, declared that she sung it in a soft sound like the mildest tone of an organ.*

The traditional excellence of all the singers who had flourished at Handel's opera, and at the rival establishment of the nobility, prepared the way for the simple beauty of the English glee. The male singers who constituted the accustomed glee party at the vocal concerts were severally excellent in the solo. Bartleman, Harrison, the Knyvetts, Vaughan, were mostly distinguished before our time, but of the fine combinations of their successors—Terrail, Goss, Leete, &c.—we have a lively recollection. What bell-like vibrating tones these men had—how plumply they came upon their notes—how well they swelled their sounds, or diminished them to the finest tenuity, can scarcely be imagined by the inexperienced amateur. In these days glees were sung in their integrity without help. The conductor struck the chord of the key and off the singers went, each man well able to take care of himself and to reach the end without putting his neighbour out of tune. Irish and Scotch melodies, and a variety of ballad airs, which used to be sung in our dramatic entertainments, entirely unaccompanied, formed a most useful exercise for singers, and encouraged them to rely upon their own powers. It was the finest test of a tone when it could exhibit itself thus denuded.

How many of these old practices in the cultivation of the voice it is desirable to revive may be worth consideration, for certainly now that we sing much better music, but always accompanied, the individual worth and quality of voices are generally deteriorated. It is not often in private society that amateurs can be trusted to go alone for half a dozen bars in good tune; and this not altogether from defective ear, but from want of habit, and

the uneasy sensation which an unaccustomed task creates. Our modern singers educated in masses are principally valuable as a part of the aggregate to which they belong. Accustomed to be helped by others, and assisted by accompaniments, many of them set upon any separate and detached service would be worse than useless. They would be found to have no tone, and to sing out of tune. This is an evil which has sprung up in modern music amidst a general improvement in taste, and much that we may otherwise be thankful for. But since it is established by all experience, that any voice judiciously used, with attention to the intonation, and an earnest attempt to realise the spirit of a composition, becomes in its degree tunable and agreeable, even when nature seems to have bestowed but little music—it should encourage every part-singer to separate practices, that he may listen to himself, learn to keep his voice steady, and to acquire self-dependence.

To this useful and practical object, our native glees are still eminently serviceable. The best of those of Stevens, S. Webbe, Battishill, Dr. Cooke, &c., show a genius very happily turned to this department of social harmony; and, from certain poetical characteristics which our countrymen appreciate, they have still a charm here which will not be very easily superseded. It has always been an agreeable feature of English society, and it still subsists in the country, that glees and part-music, without the trouble of accompaniment, or even of music-books, can be often got up *extempore* to enliven any party of pleasure, boat excursion, or country jaunt. The ruins of our abbeys and monasteries, in summertime, re-echo annually with the harmony of excursionists, who sing in "full-throated ease" amid empty wine flasks and well-ransacked provision baskets. But to make such music effective and pleasant to hear is no easy task—all unaccompanied singing requiring its own special preparation.

If a glee singer have not naturally a fine vibrating voice, an accurate ear, and taste to seize on the expressive intervals of the harmony, he is ill-furnished—but the exercise of his best faculties will strengthen and improve them. Cathedral choir men generally surpass all other singers in the execution of the glee, and the reason of it is their practice in taking the modulating notes which so often vary the harmony of the closes in ecclesiastical chants and responses. This gives a delicacy to their ear, and a beauty to the inflections of their tone, which are not so well acquired in any school as that of church music.

There is a genius peculiar to all the parts which compose the inner and lower harmony of the vocal quartett, not particularly observed by inexperienced singers, who sometimes in their per-

* These are curious facts in the records of the voice. Burney relates that Madame Le Brun went even higher than Agujari, "in real voice, of the same register as her middle notes. It seems a trick, however, which persons gifted with a fine voice of a common compass may learn." If this were the case, and such notes could be executed and listened to pleasantly, it seems unlikely that so important an addition to the scale for bravura passages should be neglected by singers ambitious of popularity. Possibly, however, it is not to be regretted that among the vocal wonders of our age we have no longer these bird-piping notes to admire, and that they have become obsolete.

formances give us the notes of a piece without the music. We observe that few know how to make much of a holding note, that permanent and simple beauty of modern and ancient music, and of instruments as well as voices. On the other hand it is a great fault of style to be constantly aiming at too much expression, and finding more meanings than a composer intended. The effective delivery of a piece of harmony certainly depends on good accent—and yet how many pieces go off badly because the performers exert themselves too much and become prominent in the wrong place. Such experience of effect as was observable in the old glee party of the vocal concerts, and which produced the perfect blending and combination of the Knyvetts, Mr. and Mrs. Vaughan, &c., may be still obtained in the practising glee society; it will require, however, not only the same elegant and sympathetic voices, but a taste like theirs, educated and refined in higher music than that of the glee.

Music in the most extensive designs and greatest scope of the art will always flourish in proportion to the perfection of its details. With a great object in view, we sometimes overlook minor but very necessary precautions towards its effective attainment. Our resources in music are so abundant that it requires consideration how best to apply them. And now that all England is choral, would it not be better even for our choruses if the performers were occasionally to segregate themselves, and try what they could do on their own account, and their sole responsibility? Voices would certainly improve, and talent hitherto latent would be discovered. Glee practice, therefore, forms a most effective and useful step in choral training, and may well develop powers adapted to the solo.

The professional chorus of London employed at the Italian Opera and the Philharmonic concerts has made of late years such an advance in the refinement of its performance as to excite general admiration. One chief reason of the excellence attained, besides that of indefatigable rehearsal, is that the capacity of each performer individually as a reader and singer is known. Vibrating voices and a thorough knowledge of music are sought in each, and consequently the performance is clear, wholly free from the noises which have nothing to do with music, and which are so injurious to the effect of a composition when wrong notes are mixed with right ones.

The progress of modern music renders it necessary that there should be a more assiduous cultivation of the ear as well as the voice; and the singer of the present day will be the better armed for all encounters, by playing the pianoforte a little, and knowing somewhat of the relations of chords. This, if not absolutely necessary, is of high utility. The voice is set upon new duties,

and Beethoven will have it take its part in harmony with as firm an intonation as a violin or clarionet in the orchestra. He expects his chorus to make an enharmonic change in perfect tune, without the least aid from instruments—to quit the key and return to it so as to meet the orchestra with perfect exactness,—and to hold a pedal note, in whatever part he may choose to place it, as unmoved as a rock. What a test of good musicianship in the sopranos and altos is the cadence “et sepultus est” of the Mass in C, where E flat is held on by the upper voices, with the leading note striking against in the lower! It is not often that we hear in amateur singing a thoroughly good pedal note that can maintain its way in spite of any combination. An inexperienced bass singer, who has obtained a pretty good intonation of the scale, will often sink to the leading note if required to hold on a note against the harmony $\sharp 7_2$. The ear requires to be trained to resist as well as to yield.

It is probable that in the futurity of music, newer effects are reserved for voices than for instruments. Until Beethoven devised for voices new effects corresponding with those of instruments, this branch of the art long remained in a conventional state. His system of writing was long condemned as unvocal; and the choral symphony it was even said could never please; but it has been transcendently performed in London this present month, and has pleased. By degrees, after long distrust of the powers and calculating foresight of a master, we are brought to comprehend his intentions.

The more the reputation of the English choir advances, the more it will depend on pursuing separate as well as combined study. For this purpose the practice of the best glees presents advantages too obvious to need any recommendation.

To be continued.

In the Court of Common Pleas, Westminster. Before the Lord Chief Justice (Sir John Jervis), Sir Cresswell Cresswell, Sir Edward Vaughan Williams, and Sir T. Noon Talfourd.

NOVELLO v. SUDLOW.

This was a special case for the opinion of the Court whether a publication of *Benedict's Part Song*, “*The Wreath*,” for gratuitous distribution, was an infringement of the Copyright Act.

Mr. Phipson argued the case for the plaintiff, and Mr. Willes for the defendant.

The plaintiff is the publisher and proprietor of a musical publication called *Novello's Part Song Book*. The Liverpool Philharmonic Society hold concerts at Liverpool, and the members, consisting of about 250 persons, perform gratuitously, and it having been determined that *Benedict's Part Song*, “*The Wreath*,” should be performed, the defendant undertook to provide each member with a copy. The defendant purchased for that purpose one of the monthly numbers of the plaintiff's work, and from it had 250

lithographic impressions taken; after which the impressions on the stones were effaced, and these copies were distributed gratuitously among the members of the society, the plaintiff's consent never having been asked. On hearing of this the plaintiff required the parts so printed to be sent to him, and his copyright editions purchased instead; but the defendant wrote back expressing his surprise at the demand, as he had never sold any of the copies, or hired any out. An action was thereupon brought, and the defendant contended that the declaration disclosing these facts showed no cause of action.

For the plaintiff, Mr. PHIPSON contended that the point was one of considerable importance, for if the defendant should succeed, the Copyright Act, instead of being a great boon, would be one of the most inefficient Acts that had passed. The question turned on the construction of the 15th sec. of the 5th and 6th Victoria, c. 45 (the Copyright Act), which provided that if any person should "print, or cause to be printed, either for sale or exportation, any book in which there should be subsisting copyright, without the consent in writing of the proprietor thereof, or shall import for sale or hire any such book so having been unlawfully printed from parts beyond the sea, or knowing such book to have been so unlawfully printed or imported, shall sell, publish, or expose to sale or hire, or cause to be sold, published, or exposed to sale or hire, any such book so unlawfully printed or imported without such consent as aforesaid, such offender shall be liable to a special action on the case." The interpretation clause defined the word "book" to mean "music," and the word "copyright" to mean "the sole and exclusive liberty of printing, or otherwise multiplying copies of any subject to which the said word was in this Act applied." This was an enactment for the benefit of authors and publishers, and gave them a clear and well-defined right. The question was, did this 15th section curtail the common law right of action for an infringement of copyright? It was submitted that it did not, and that the plaintiff had a right of action independently of the statute ("Miller v. Taylor," 4 Burr). If under this section it was no infringement of the Act to print and give away copies, Mr. Dickens's new work, *Bleak House*, might be copied the day after it was issued, and reprints of it be given away for nothing.

For the defendant, Mr. WILLES contended the Legislature, after great consideration, had set down in the statute the claims and rights of authors, with a certain regard to individual liberty.

The CHIEF-JUSTICE. — For the encouragement of authors you say the Legislature took away their common law remedy for an infringement of copyright.

Mr. WILLES. — Some are of opinion with Lord Camden, that the honour and glory of authorship is its sufficient reward. Others agree with Lord Mansfield, that authors ought to have the sole benefit of their works. The Act of Parliament determined the right, whatever the right might be ("Rex v. Harris," 4 T. R. "Boosey v. Jeffries," 20 L. J.). What had been done was not within the provisions of the statute. In point of fact, if the plaintiff's argument were to prevail, it would extend to give an action in the minutest case, for instance of copying out a piece of

music for a pupil to play or the like, or by a young lady for her music book.

Mr. PHIPSON having been heard in reply.

The COURT, having taken time to consider its judgment, held that the multiplication of the songs for gratuitous distribution, as stated in the case, was an infringement of the Copyright Act, and that the plaintiff was entitled to recover. Copyright is defined in the Act to mean "the sole and exclusive liberty of printing or otherwise multiplying copies of any subject to which the said word is applied." It was enough for the Court to determine that it could not collect from the 15th or 16th, or any other clauses of the Act, an intention of the legislature to restrict the right which in express terms it gave. It is admitted that the plaintiff possesses that right. The act of the defendant in multiplying copies of his work, without his consent, though for gratuitous circulation, is a violation of that right.

Judgment for the plaintiff.

"JERUSALEM."

AN ORATORIO, by H. H. PIERSON, Esq., late Professor of Music in the University of Edinburgh.

The gentleman whose work heads this notice, has long been known abroad by the name of Mansfeldt, under which cognomen he has published various compositions. Although the son of a high dignitary of the Church—an enthusiasm for the art led him in very early life to study music as a profession. Among his first instructors were Mr. Attwood, of St. Paul's, and Mr. Corfe, organist, of Salisbury. He next studied harmony under Dr. Walmisley, professor of music, at Cambridge. From thence he proceeded to Liepsig, where he was in frequent intercourse with Mendelssohn, although not his pupil; and after that he proceeded to Dresden. He published several songs at Vienna,* which made considerable sensation. His first work, a comic opera,—"The Elves and the Earth King"—was acted at Brunn, the capital of Moravia. Mr. Pierson went from Vienna to Berlin, where a selection from his opera—"Leisla"—was performed before the Court at a Concert at the palace, and much admired. "Leisla" was afterwards performed at the Opera, at Hamburg, in 1849, and was successful. The revolution came soon after it was produced, and the Opera House was closed for a considerable period. Mr. Pierson was elected in the same year to the Professorship at Edinburgh, but resigned ultimately, because he was not permitted to have his written lectures read by any person except himself, and a nervous defect in speech prevented his undertaking that duty. Mr. Pierson has for several years resided in Hamburg, having married a German lady.

The words of the oratorio were selected from the Holy Scriptures and the Prayers, and arranged by the late William Sanicroft Holmes, Esq., of Gawdy Hall, near Harleston, in this county, not very long previous to his decease, of whom Mr. Pierson was an old and intimate friend. The selection is exceedingly beautiful, and capable of immense declamatory effect. The argument of the Oratorio is thus given—

PART I.—Introduction, or Prologue. Christ foretells the destruction of Jerusalem; the Crucifixion. Prophecy of Moses, concerning the Invasion and Conquest of Judea by the Romans.

Prophetic warnings and denunciations chiefly from Isaiah and Jeremiah. The Fall of Jerusalem depicted.

Continued on page 11.

* Among the early publications of Mr. H. H. Pierson, twelve Canzonets, entitled "Thoughts of Melody," and six characteristic songs of Shelley, were received with much public favor.—*Ed. Musical Times*.